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New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Šorytė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I address the Security Council at a time when the risk of escalation in Israel and Palestine is palpable. The past month has witnessed unconscionable crimes of hatred committed by extremist elements, reprehensible retaliatory violence, provocations at Jerusalem's holy sites and a worrying increase in rockets launched from Gaza towards Israel. The coming days will see the anniversary of the conclusion of last year's devastating Gaza conflict, a conflict from which the Palestinians there have yet to recover. One year on, their continued suffering highlights the inadequacy of our collective response to date. I therefore begin my briefing to the Council today with an appeal to political, military, community and religious leaders on all sides to work together to reduce tensions, reject violence and prevent extremists from escalating the situation and hijacking the political agenda.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's strong condemnation of the horrific terrorist arson attack, apparently committed by extremist Jewish settlers, on a Palestinian family in the occupied West Bank village of Duma in the early hours of 31 July. The attack killed 18-month-old Ali Dawabsha. His father died of wounds five days later, while his mother and four-year-old brother are still fighting for their lives. The Secretary-General has welcomed the strong condemnations of the attack by Prime Minister Netanyahu and other Israeli officials, as well as political and religious leaders across the spectrum. At the same time, we denounce the calls that have been made by Hamas and Islamic Jihad to escalate the violence and carry out revenge attacks. At a moment of heightened emotions and anger, such incitement can serve only to bring about more tragedy. I urge the Israeli Government to promptly bring the perpetrators of this heinous act to justice.

I also note the Israeli Cabinet's decision on 2 July to strengthen the legal and institutional means for addressing terrorism by Jewish extremists and ensure that the new anti-terrorism law applies equally to all perpetrators. However, I am concerned about the decision to extend the use of prolonged administrative detention, which the United Nations has consistently opposed. This practice, whether used against Palestinians or Israelis, is incompatible with international human rights standards and should be ended. All administrative detainees should be promptly charged or released. I want to underscore that this attack, like so many over the years, including those against Israeli settlers, occurred in the context of chronically inadequate law enforcement in the West Bank. Such violence is possible because of the environment created as a result of Israel's decades-long policy of illegal settlement activities.

The goal is clear, but more than 20 years of failed negotiations have bred mistrust and, worse, have led to the slow and painful withering of hope. In such a contentious environment, restoring confidence, before returning to realistic negotiations, is a must. What is needed now is a comprehensive approach on three levels — on the ground, in the region and with the international community — to fundamentally alter the current negative dynamics and begin to shape a clear and positive pathway towards peace. On the Israeli side, that should reflect significant policy shifts to enable Palestine's sovereignty, economy and security to grow. On the Palestinian side, unity is critical. The legitimate Palestinian Authority must represent all of Palestine and all Palestinians. I am encouraged by the increased cooperation between the Quartet and key regional actors, and I fully support enhanced exploration of how the region, including through the Arab Peace Initiative, may contribute to resolving the conflict. The Secretary-General supports the Quartet's work to connect these various levels of engagement.

In the West Bank, after failed attempts to form a Palestinian Government of national unity, a Government reshuffle resulted in the appointment on 31 July of five new ministers. The process met with some resistance among Palestinian factions.

The reporting period was marked by continued violence, including incidents that resulted in Palestinian

casualties as well as a number of attacks on Israelis and Israeli security forces. Israeli security forces conducted some 188 search-and-arrest operations, resulting in the arrest of some 292 Palestinians. A total of 203 Palestinians were injured, including 40 children and seven women. Six Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli security forces, including a 17-year-old. Twelve members of the Israeli security forces were also wounded, with no fatalities reported. I reiterate that any use of force by Israeli security forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, must be consistent with international human rights law. Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the West Bank resulted in injuries to nine Palestinians, including four children, and seven Israelis. On 12 August, in what was apparently a retaliatory attack for the administrative detention of several Jewish extremists, another arson attack was reported in Ein Samia, where a tent belonging to a Bedouin was set on fire and completely burned, reportedly by Jewish extremists.

Israel's practice of demolishing homes and structures also continued. This month, 86 structures, 26 of them residential, were demolished in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacing 177 Palestinians, including 89 children. On 17 August 22 structures were demolished in four communities in the planned E-1 area, affecting vulnerable Palestinian Bedouins in particular and displacing 78 people, including 49 children, the largest number of Palestinians displaced in the West Bank in one day in nearly three years. And yesterday 27 structures, eight of them residential, were demolished, resulting in 42 displaced, including 27 children in the Jordan Valley Area C community of Fasayil al-Wusta. The Secretary-General calls on the Israeli authorities to halt the demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, revoke plans that would result in the forcible transfer of Palestinian communities and implement an inclusive planning and zoning regime that will enable Palestinians' residential and community development needs to be met.

Recent changes in Israeli law and policy affecting the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, risk compounding the already precarious human rights situation. On 30 July, the Knesset amended the Prisons Act to allow a judge to order the force-feeding of a hunger-striking prisoner to prevent imminent death, if that is recommended by a doctor. While Israel insists that it has established a careful legal mechanism in order to strictly limit this means of enforcement to instances where a threat to life exists, numerous human rights and medical bodies have questioned whether force-feeding meets international standards of medical ethics, safety and human rights. Care should be taken to consider and address the underlying human rights concerns, including prolonged administrative detention, that lead prisoners to undertake such extreme protests. We are aware that the status of prolonged hunger striker Mohammed Allan may be evolving.

On 20 July, the Knesset also amended the Israeli penal code to increase harsh punishments for throwing stones at moving vehicles, allowing for sentences of up 20 years. The law is likely to disproportionately affect children. In another legal development, the Israeli Supreme Court legitimized the applicability of Israel's 1951 absentee property law to Palestinian property in East Jerusalem when the owner is in the West Bank, a move that enables property to be expropriated from Palestinians who have become absentees through no fault of their own.

Turning to Gaza, the unrelenting pressure on the socioeconomic situation, owing to the continued closures, the lack of electricity and water and the slow pace of reconciliation, continues to feed the population's discontent. While much remains to be done, I welcome some positive developments on reconstruction, particularly under the residential stream of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, which enables the reconstruction of homes that have been completely destroyed. Since its launch in June, and thanks to financial assistance from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Germany, 2,250 families have been processed, of whom some 630 have already purchased construction materials. Although the Mechanism is working, current resources are insufficient to meet the massive demand for assistance. In a recent letter to the foreign ministers who participated in the October 2014 Cairo conference on Gaza's reconstruction, the Special Coordinator urged donor countries to fulfil their pledges.

We welcome Egypt's opening of the Rafah crossing for several days this week. The Secretary-General urges the Egyptian authorities to allow the Rafah crossing to be opened on a more regular basis while taking into account Egypt's security concerns.

Security incidents in Gaza continued to be recorded. The Secretary-General condemns the firing at Israel by Palestinian militants in Gaza of 24 rockets, one of which hit Israel with no reported injuries. Palestinian

militants also test-fired seven rockets at the sea. Israeli security forces conducted four air strikes inside Gaza. On 7 August, in response to a rocket fired from Gaza, the Israeli Air Force struck a Hamas training site, injuring four Palestinians. In incidents that took place following the Duma arson attack, a 17-year-old Palestinian was shot dead and two others were injured by Israeli security forces in the vicinity of the wall of separation.

The Secretary-General is relieved by Commissioner-General Krähenbühl's announcement today that the schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will indeed open in time. The Secretary-General joins the Commissioner-General in expressing his appreciation in that regard to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and the Slovak Republic. The Governments of host countries, particularly the State of Palestine, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Lebanon, have spared no effort during this challenging period. The Secretary-General is sincerely grateful for their support. A sustainable solution must still be found to address UNRWA's long-term funding needs so that we can ensure that the provision of basic services, such as education, are no longer at risk for Palestine refugees.

I should like to say few words about the situations in Lebanon and Syria. In Syria, the air raids by Syrian forces on a marketplace in the town of Douma, which reportedly killed and injured more than 300 civilians on 15 and 16 August, were some of the bloodiest since the conflict started in March 2011. This would constitute yet another crime for which those responsible must be held accountable. Hostilities must end and the parties must show genuine commitment to resolving the conflict through an irreversible political transition, by engaging in the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, as endorsed in the Security Council's presidential statement S/PRST/2015/15.

In Lebanon, political differences continued to hinder the proper functioning of Lebanese State institutions, despite Prime Minister Salam's commendable efforts to run the Government. We continue to call on Lebanon's leaders to act urgently and responsibly by filling the presidential vacuum without further delay. The situation along the Blue Line and in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon area of operations has remained calm, despite Israeli violations of Lebanese air space on an almost daily basis.

In conclusion, the recurrent violent incidents and radicalization in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, threaten to further destabilize an already tense environment. The incidents share a common thread. They are the inevitable product of a failure to make the tough choices necessary to resolve this conflict. They are the ramifications of a failure to prioritize the pursuit of a shared future built on trust rather than fear. We can no longer accept that reality. It is time to reverse the perilous tide that we are facing and restore, to Israelis and Palestinians alike, the hope that is in danger of being stifled by those promoting their hate-driven agendas.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.